

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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Idioms, Hebraic: I have not seen any teachings on your website about Hebraic expressions in the New Testament and how mistranslations occurred in the Greek. Do you have any information on this?

Many in today's Messianic community conclude that the Greek of the Gospels does not accurately reflect the "true sayings" of Yeshua. But before making hasty judgments, there are several factors that are not often considered. First of all, the Gospels were not composed during the Earthly life of Yeshua. The events were not "written down" as they occurred. Secondly, the target audiences of the Gospels were in the Greek-speaking Diaspora. And third, we have to remember that a thoroughly Jewish style of Greek existed with the production of the Septuagint. The same kind of grammar and sentence construction that we see in the Gospels mirrors much of that of the LXX. Furthermore, to assume that Yeshua *exclusively spoke Hebrew or Aramaic* in His recorded interactions simply is not true. Yeshua certainly did not speak to Pontius Pilate in Hebrew.

One of the major claims that Hebrew New Testament advocates make is that the Apostolic Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, are full of First Century Hebrew idioms. It is claimed that these idioms cannot be accurately translated, and thus they reflect that the Gospels were originally written in Hebrew. **Many Christian scholars agree that there are colloquial expressions or Hebraisms unique to the First Century present in the Gospels.** These include terms like "good eye" or "bad eye" and what they meant to their Jewish audience. However, many Hebrew New Testament advocates will say that these terms and expressions are unknown to the world of Christian scholasticism, and that God has perhaps only revealed these things—the so-called "truth"—to "them." This is likewise false. One almost universally recognized Hebraism among theologians appears in Matthew 16:19, where Yeshua speaks about "binding" and "loosing":

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, **and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.**"

This expression actually has its own entry under "Binding and Loosing" in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary (ABD)*. Raymond F. Collins states the following, reflecting a strong grasp on the unique Jewish character of this phrase:

"Matthew introduces 'binding' and 'loosing' in his gospel without further explanation, thereby suggesting that the practice to which these expressions refer was known to his community. Since Josephus writes of the Pharisees' power to loose and bind (*luein kai desmein*; *JW* 1 § 111), it is likely that the primary interpretive analogue is to be sought within contemporary rabbinic practice. Within Matthew's community the Scriptures were midrashically interpreted (e.g., Matt 1:22) and appropriate *halakah* was established (e.g., Matt 5:21-48). Thus it is probable that the practice to which the Matthean 'binding and loosing' refers is the interpretation of the Scriptures and the determination of an appropriate Christian way of life" (Raymond F. Collins, "Binding and Loosing," in *ABD*, 1:744).

Of course, in order to properly understand what is written in Matthew's Gospel as "bind" (Grk. *deō*, δέω) and "loose" (Grk. *luō*, λύω), one must be familiar with First Century Jewish history. Josephus, specifically referenced here, writes about the reign of Alexandra, a queen who ruled over the Jewish people several generations before Yeshua, and her involvement with the Pharisees:

"Now, Alexandra hearkened to them to an extraordinary degree, as being herself a woman of great piety towards God. But these Pharisees artfully insinuated themselves into her favor little by little, and became themselves the real administrators of the public affairs; they banished and reduced whom they pleased; **they bound and loosed [men] at their pleasure**" (*Wars of the Jews* 1.111).

Interestingly enough, William Whiston, translator of this edition of Josephus' works, indicates in a footnote that "Here we have the oldest and most authentic Jewish exposition of

binding and loosing, for punishing or absolving men; not for declaring actions lawful or unlawful, as some more modern Jews and Christians vainly pretend” (p 551-552), referencing Matthew 16:19 and 18:18. Whether you agree with his interpretation or not here is unimportant. What is important is that he identifies it as an Hebraism that is used in later works, namely the Gospel of Matthew.

In the Greek text of Matthew, this phrase was obviously written literally as “binding and loosing,” and would have been understood by Matthew’s target audience as relating to determining the *halachah* or religious orthopraxy of a community. The only way that this phrase can be possibly understood—that is if one is unfamiliar with the terminology “binding and loosing”—is knowing the history behind it. Translation *into any language* alone will simply not help.

There are many more widely recognized Hebraisms in the Gospels by Christian scholars today, and are discussed in many technical commentaries of Biblical books. However, simply because there are Hebraisms in the Gospels or the Apostolic Scriptures does not prove that they were originally written in Hebrew. **It proves that they have an Hebraic background, and that one must be familiar with the history of Biblical times in examining the text.** Likewise, some things that appear to be Hebraisms may not be. R. Timothy McLay explains, “what might be explained as a *Semitism* in the NT, whether an *Aramaism* or a *Hebraism*, might just as easily be due to the prior influence of the Greek Jewish Scriptures on the style and language of the writer (*Septuagintism*)” (*The Use of the Septuagint in New Testament Research*, p 32). He further states, “An appreciation for the ways in which the LXX translators rendered the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek language is also necessary for our exegesis of the NT because of the NT writers’ use of the Scriptures” (Ibid., p 44). This only further exemplifies the need for Messianic Bible teachers and students to be familiar with the Septuagint.

David Allan Black adds to this, “it is possible that the New Testament writers incorporated oral or written sources that were translations of Aramaic or Hebrew into Greek that contained Semitisms in proportion to the literalness of the translation. Thus, it would be surprising if speakers whose linguistic background was Semitic did not betray some Semitic influence in their use of Greek” (*It’s Still Greek to Me*, p 151). Of course, the principal Hebrew and Aramaic resources employed by the Apostolic writers were the Tanach Scriptures.

In determining whether or not something is truly an Hebraism in the Gospels, we must consider a broad base of information, including similar expressions used in the Hebrew Bible, First Century Rabbinic literature, as well as credible scholastic support. **In the vast majority of cases, advocates of a Hebrew New Testament do not consider these things.** And, in many cases, we could legitimately accuse some Hebrew New Testament advocates of *manufacturing idioms* that have no substantial basis either in the text, history, respected academic opinion, *and possibly even fact*. Such is the case we discovered with the text of Luke 22:60-62, and Yeshua’s words to Peter about a “rooster crowing”:

“But Peter said, ‘Man, I do not know what you are talking about.’ Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, **‘Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.’** And he went out and wept bitterly.”

The claim that this is an Hebraism is presented on the following basis. One Hebrew New Testament advocate states, “The ‘rooster’ or ‘cock’ that Peter and *Yeshua* heard was not a bird at all, but a man. That man was a priest at the Temple. He was the one who had the responsibility of unlocking the Temple doors each and every morning before dawn....The priest in question was known as the Temple Crier, and he was called the *Gever* in Hebrew, which means ‘cock’ or ‘rooster’” (*The Quiet Revival*, p 15). The problem is not suggesting the *possibility that this could be* an Hebraism, and the Gospel writers are relying on their audience to know that a “rooster” or “cock” could be the Temple Crier; the problem is with the assumption that this is “is [a] mistranslation of the original text,” being an example of “A common problem that exists in our English bibles” (Ibid., 14), thus this one expression requires the Gospels to have been written in

Hebrew. Furthermore, consider the poor external evidence that is provided for this being an Hebraism:

“[C]hickens were not allowed in Jerusalem during Temple times. The reason for this prohibition was because chickens are very dirty birds and they have the obnoxious habit of finding their way into places where they do not belong. Therefore, to assure that chickens could not gain access to the Temple and desecrate the Holy Place or, worse yet, the Holy of Holies, the Priests simply forbid [sic] everyone in Jerusalem from having chickens” (Ibid., pp 14-15).

The problem with making the assumption that “a rooster crowing” is really a priest in the Temple—and not “a rooster crowing”—thus the Greek Scriptures are in gross error, should be obvious. First, if the “rooster” or “cock” is a valid reference to the Temple crier, we cannot assume that a Jewish person reading *alektōr* (ἀλέκτωρ) instead of “*gever*” (note that this term is not used in modern Hebrew translations of the New Testament) would not have known this. Secondly, to assume that this is a priest, and not a chicken—as chickens were *supposedly* not allowed in Jerusalem—is to assume that chickens outside the city of Jerusalem cannot be heard audibly when they crow. And third, and perhaps most important, no academic opinions surrounding the validity of this being an “Hebraism” are offered. We are led to believe—based on only scant evidence—that the Greek Apostolic Scriptures are saturated with errors such as these.

In our opinion, these are all the classic cases of a *manufactured Hebraism*—**one that is no Hebraism at all and has been totally made up**. If this be the case about one seemingly insignificant reference about a “rooster” or “chicken” in the Gospels, then what will some of these Hebrew New Testament advocates do to other, more important Scriptures? Can we suddenly not trust the Gospels for the basic facts contained therein? Will we suddenly start hearing that when Yeshua is eating a meal in a person’s house it really means something else? What about Yeshua healing someone or delivering a person from demons? This may sound extreme, but this is how far it could go when we dismantle the validity of the Greek source text behind the Apostolic Scriptures. What other basic facts are on the chopping block? The Messianic movement cannot afford to be accused of “radically reinterpreting” the Bible. We have to be very conservative and careful when it comes to determining whether or not a saying of Yeshua is a legitimate Hebraism, or is an expression that we need to examine the Scriptures and history for more understanding. In the end, whether or not something is an Hebraism can only be determined in a chapter-by-chapter and verse-by-verse study of the Gospel narratives.

(This entry has adapted information from *Scripture Under Scrutiny: Was the New Testament Really Written in Hebrew?*, a part of TNN Press’ Messianic Helper Series.)

posted 19 June, 2006

Image of God, Human Beings: I heard a Messianic teaching that advocated human beings were not made in the image of God? Can you explain this?

There has been some confusion in a few sectors of the Messianic community as to whether or not man has been made in God’s image. Genesis 1:26-27 tells us, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Man was created in the *tzelem Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים תְּצַלְמֵהוּ) and was given abilities that all other creatures were not. The modern Hebrew word *matzlemah* (מַצְלֵמָה) or “camera” is derived from this Biblical word. *TWOT* remarks, “Man was made in God’s image...and likeness (*d’mût*) which is then explained as his having dominion over God’s creation as vice-regent...God’s image obviously does not consist in man’s body which was formed from earthly matter, but in his spiritual, intellectual, moral likeness to God from whom is animating breath came” (2:768). Rabbis, theologians, and ministers over the centuries have all struggled with what it means to be created in the image of God.

There are some who believe that only Adam, the first human being, was created in God's image. Because of Adam and Eve's fall from grace, it is said, human beings are no longer made in God's image. This is based on Genesis 5:3, "When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of *a son* in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth." This Hebrew text says *v'yoled b'demuto k'tzalemo* (וַיּוֹלֵד בְּדַמּוּתוֹ כְּצֶלְמוֹ), "and begetteth *a son* in his likeness, according to his image" (YLT). According to this, Seth was made after the image and likeness of Adam, as opposed to the image and likeness of God. Those who advocate that human beings are not made in God's image stop there.

But the Book of Genesis itself does not stop there. Genesis 9:6 further says, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man." Men who are killed by sinful men are still considered by God to be made in His image. The difference is, of course, unlike Adam who was originally created without a sin nature, every human born since Adam has inherited that sin nature. In that context alone are we made "in Adam's image."

James' message in James 3:9 is that the tongue can curse other people, all of whom "have been made in the likeness of God." He uses the Greek word *homoïōsis* (ὁμοίωσις), "a making like" (*Vine*, 372). This is the same word used in the LXX to translate *tzelem* in Genesis 1:26, and UBSHNT renders *homoïōsin Theou* (ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ) as *tzelem Elohim*, indeed indicating that man, even after the Fall in the Garden of Eden, has been made in "the image of God." James expects his audience to show due respect for other human beings through what they say, regardless of whether or not they are saved and of the community of faith. John Wesley comments, "Indeed we have now lost this likeness; yet there remains from thence an indelible nobleness, which we ought to reverence both in ourselves and others." While we are not as perfect as Adam was prior to the Fall, we still have enough of God's image within us as fallen humans to show others proper respect and character. We have enough of God's image within us that we should be drawn to things of God rather than things of Satan.

Claiming that human beings are no longer made in God's image, when the Book of Genesis and James' epistle say otherwise, is damaging to every single one of us and is insulting to our Creator. While we do have a fallen sin nature inherited from Adam, we are not worthless creatures and we have the responsibility to respect one another. We do have to receive salvation to have God's image fully restored in us. God sent us His only Son, Yeshua, because He loves us and wants mankind to succeed and wants that relationship to be completely restored. In the words of Nahum Sarna,

"A human being is the pinnacle of Creation. This unique status is communicated in a variety of ways, not least by the simple fact that humankind is last in a manifestly ascending, gradual order. The creation of human life is an exception to the rule of creation by divine fiat...Human beings are to enjoy a unique relationship to God, who communicates with them alone and who shares with them the custody and administration of the world" (*JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 11).

posted 22 October, 2005

Inclusive Language: What can you tell me about the inclusive language debate? Does your ministry, or does the Messianic movement as a whole, have a position about it?

The debate over using so-called "inclusive language" started in liberal branches of Christianity and Judaism, and was largely designed to eliminate masculine terminology and replace it with gender neutral terminology. It has led to the production of Bible versions such as the Revised English Bible (REB) and New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which use terms such as humanity, humankind, human being, person, and brothers and sisters, as opposed to the more common man, mankind, men, and brothers. On the one hand, using terms such as "humanity" for "man" can sometimes make a text clearer and easier to understand, but on the other, inserting "and sisters" adds words to a text that were not included by the original author. A balance needs to be

struck between representing the historical setting of the Scriptures, as well as maintaining their universal application for both genders.

In the past decade the inclusive language issue has begun to appear in evangelical Christian circles. In 2005, the Today's NIV translation was published, a revision of the original New International Version (1984), which uses more neutral terms such as humanity and human beings, but not to the extent of the NRSV. Zondervan's intention to produce the TNIV caused its long-standing relationship with Holman Bible Publishers, a major Baptist publishing house, to be strained. In 2004, the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) was published, designed to be a replacement to use in their educational materials for the NIV.

The inclusive language issue does present some valid concerns for pastors and Bible teachers alike. Is it right, for example, to only use terms such as man, men, mankind, and brothers from the pulpit? If these are the only terms used by someone, then it is probably valid that more broad sweeping terms such as humanity and brothers and sisters should be employed. Likewise, inclusive language advocates probably go too far in insisting that no masculine references be made in theological works, as this would cloud the legitimate history behind the composition of the Bible.

A fair solution for the Messianic movement, which largely is unfamiliar with this issue, is to seek for a balance in the terms that we use. We should not exclusively use man or mankind, nor should we exclusively use human being or humanity. We need to be sensitive to those around us, making sure they are not marginalized, but also recognize that most secular people use man and mankind to refer to the human race. We need not be overbearing or too concerned as inclusive language advocates often are.

posted 28 September, 2006

Isaac, Sacrificed: I once heard a Messianic teacher say that Isaac was actually sacrificed by Abraham, and then resurrected. Do you have any opinion about this?

Hebrews 11:17-19 details the faith of Abraham, who believed in God so strongly that he was prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac without hesitation:

“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, ‘IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED’ He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.”

All should be in agreement that Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22:1-19) does represent and foreshadow the much greater sacrifice that Yeshua the Messiah would endure for us. But is it necessary for Isaac himself to have actually died and then resurrected to fulfill a valid typeology?

There are some in the Messianic community who have gone too far, interpreting v. 19 as though Abraham actually did sacrifice Isaac. In *The Scriptures* translation, commonly used among “Sacred Name” advocates in the independent Messianic movement, Hebrews 11:17, 19 reads, “By belief, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Yitshaq, and he who had received the promises offered up his only brought-forth son...reckoning that Elohim was able to raise, even from the dead, from which he received him back, as a type.” One teaching based on this rendering can be quoted as saying, “The text is clear. He was offered, and then raised back to life by Elohim [God].”

There are several problems with this view, two of which are only solved by an examination of Greek verbs. V. 17 includes two usages of the verb *prospherō* (προσφέρω), “to present, offer, give” (LS, 699). Its first usage, pertaining to Abraham having “offered up Isaac,” is *prosenēnochen* (προσενήνοχεν), appearing in the perfect active indicative tense, describing an action that has already taken place: “had offered.” Those who are totally unacquainted with the Isaac narrative in Genesis could conclude that Abraham actually offered him up as a sacrifice. However, the second rendering of “offered,” appearing in ISR, KJV, and NKJV is unjustified. The Greek verb form *prosepheren* (προσέφερον) in v. 17b appears in the imperfect active indicative

tense. While describing a past action, that past action is not “offered,” but is more accurately “was offering” (LITV, HCSB), being imperfect. This is extrapolated as “was ready to offer up” (RSV, NRSV), “was about to sacrifice” (NIV), and “was in the act of offering” (ESV).

Abraham “offered” up Isaac; but this was an action that took place in his mind—not in the physical world—as Abraham was resolved to sacrifice his son. But v. 17b tells us that he was only in the process of killing him. The command from God was, “Do not lay a hand on the boy...Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son” (Genesis 22:12, NIV). While Isaac’s participation in this event prefigures Yeshua’s death and resurrection for us, the connection is typeological; Isaac *did not die* as a part of this “rehearsal.” Only “a ram caught in the thicket by his horns” (Genesis 22:13) was killed at this event.

(This entry includes excerpts from the editor’s commentary *Hebrews for the Practical Messianic*.)

posted 05 September, 2007

Isaiah, Book of: What can you tell me about the composition of the Book of Isaiah?

Approximate date: 700s B.C.E. (Right, some conservative-moderate); 500s B.C.E. (some conservative-moderate); 500s-300s B.C.E. (Left)

Prophet/author(s): Isaiah son of Amoz (Right); Isaiah son of Amoz and later editors (some conservative-moderate); Isaiah son of Amoz, “Deutero-Isaiah” (some conservative-moderate, some Left); Isaiah son of Amoz, “Deutero-Isaiah,” “Tritio-Isaiah” (some conservative-moderate, some Left)

Location of prophet/author(s): Land of Israel or Jerusalem (Right, some conservative-moderate) Land of Israel, Jerusalem, and/or Babylon (some conservative-moderate, Left)

Target audience and their location: people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Right, some conservative-moderate); Southern Kingdom Israelites in Babylonian exile (some conservative-moderate, Left)

One of the most important and frequently discussed books of the Bible is undoubtedly the Book of Isaiah. In the Jewish theological tradition Isaiah (Heb. *Yeshayahu*, יֵשַׁעְיָהוּ) is the first of the Latter Prophets (considering that Joshua-Kings compose the Former Prophets). Many songs, important theological concepts, wisdom ideas, and even some Western social concepts are derived from Isaiah—sometimes without people even realizing it (*EXP*, 3:4). Isaiah is a text that speaks in very broad terms to individuals, communities, and entire nations about their relationship with God. Isaiah is not something that is read easily like one of the histories of the Tanach, and requires a person to read it very observantly. It has been a widely considered and debated text throughout Jewish and Christian history, and this will probably continue as the Messianic movement grows (Dillard and Longman, 268).

The prophet depicted in this book is identified by name as Isaiah the son of Amoz (1:1), something that is upheld by the Apostolic Scriptures (Matthew 12:17-21; John 12:28-41; Romans 10:16, 20-21). This Isaiah was a contemporary of Amos, Hosea, and Micah, beginning his service in 740 B.C.E., and some Jewish tradition considers him to be a relative of the royal court (b.*Megillah* 10b; *EXP*, 3:4) and even sawn in two (cf. Hebrews 11:37).

Isaiah prophesied during the period of the Northern Kingdom of Israel’s decline and Assyria’s expansion. Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom in 722-721 B.C.E., and the supplementary history behind Isaiah is largely found in 2 Kings 15-21 and 2 Chronicles 26-33. King Uzziah dies in 740 B.C.E. (6:1), ending a fifty-year period of stability and co-existence with the Northern Kingdom (*ISBE*, 2:886-887). Isaiah enters the scene and warns the Southern Kingdom of Judah that its sin will bring judgment by Babylon. Against this backdrop, much of Isaiah’s prophecy deals with the judgment and restoration of the Southern Kingdom, with the Northern

Kingdom having already been judged (*NIDB*, 472), even though ultimately all of Israel will be restored—and it will have consequences for not just Israel but also the nations.

Many conservative scholars accept the premise that all of the prophecies in Isaiah are attributed to a single Isaiah. This is largely because of the commonality throughout the book, with themes seen such as punishment, Jerusalem as God's holy mountain, and a highway being made by Him to Jerusalem. One of the strongest arguments made in favor of Isaianic unity is its usage of the term "Holy One of Israel" twelve times, and other various common words and phrases (*ISBE*, 2:896-897; Dillard and Longman, 271-273).

Until modern times, the unity of the Book of Isaiah was something that was assumed by most scholars (*ISBE*, 2:893; *EXP*, 3:6-8; *ECB*, 489). Divisions that occur in Isaiah cause some to think that there are several different "Isaiahs" responsible for various parts of the text—perhaps as many as three. It is sometimes thought that chs. 1-35 begin with a series of prophecies about the Southern Kingdom in relation to Assyria, chs. 36-39 form an historical interlude, then introducing chs. 40-66 (Harrison, 775). Chs. 36-66 are often referred to as Second Isaiah or Deutero-Isaiah in various theological works.

Propositions for Deutero-Isaiah actually began in the Middle Ages with the Jewish scholar Abraham Ibn-Ezra suggesting that a second prophet spoke to those in Babylonian Exile (*ISBE*, 2:893; *EDB*, 648; Dillard and Longman, 268; *Jewish Study Bible*, 781). It was believed that the later prophecies seen in Isaiah were given during the Babylonian Exile with the expectation that Cyrus of Persia would be used to deliver Israel. These prophecies, for lack of a better description, were given by a Pseudo or Second Isaiah. Some conservative theologians believe in Deutero-Isaiah (Dillard and Longman, 275), but most believe that these later prophecies are predictive and were given by Isaiah son of Amoz. "Conservative opinion is anchored in its theological conviction...about the reality of prophetic revelation—that the Spirit of God did give to ancient writers insight into the future" (*Ibid.*, 274)

Liberal scholars are often the ones found to be advocating the existence of a Deutero-Isaiah for the compilation of chs. 40-55 during the Babylonian Exile, and even a Trito-Isaiah for chs. 56-66 (*IDB*, 2:735-742; Dillard and Longman, 269-271). These trends largely began among Nineteenth Century German scholars who adapted Ibn-Ezra's view and were influenced by some of the views espoused by Pentateuchal source criticism (Harrison, 765-771; *ABD*, 3:473). Third Isaiah was added as another prophet who spoke apocalyptic visions of God's judgment on the world. A good summation of these views is found in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* entry for the Book of Isaiah, which is actually divided into three sections for: First Isaiah, Second Isaiah, and Third Isaiah (*ABD*, 3:472-502).

Liberals often tend to see the composition of Isaiah as having taken place over a very long, drawn out period of compilation and redaction. Some do not even believe that Isaiah was finished until the Third Century B.C.E. (*ECB*, 489). Conservatives often respond to these views by pointing out that Isaiah's prophecies were made under the assumption that the Southern Kingdom was doomed, and these words were predictive in nature (*EXP*, 3:9-11). Even some liberals urge caution, warning that "It is not clear to us when, or why, the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah were combined with those of Isaiah son of Amoz" (*Jewish Study Bible*, 784). Canonical criticism of the Bible recognizes that Isaiah is to be taken as a single work (Dillard and Longman, 273).

There is certainly discussion as to whether or not Isaiah simply prophesied these words, or whether he wrote them down as a prophetic work (*NBCR*, 588-589). It is likely that Isaiah wrote down many of these prophecies, or that those associated with him did this. If one holds to some kind of unity for the Book of Isaiah, it is not improbable that Isaiah's prophecies are interspersed with historical data because they were redacted by the School of the Prophets or Isaiah's immediate disciples (*NBCR*, 589; cf. *IDBSup*, 457). Talmudic tradition indicates that Isaiah was actually written by the men of Hezekiah (*b.Bava Batra* 14b), which probably was "in the sense of 'edited' or 'compiled'" (Harrison, 765). Some theologians today propose that the composition of Isaiah was intended to be read in two paralleling volumes with concurrent themes (Dillard and Longman, 281).

The textual integrity of the Book of Isaiah actually remains very strong. A single scroll of Isaiah was discovered at Qumran. Although Isaiah is currently placed as the first of the Prophets, this may not have always been the case in antiquity (*IDB*, 2:734). The Hebrew Masoretic Text of Isaiah is relatively intact, with only minor variants. Among ancient witnesses, those seen among the Dead Sea Scrolls are very important. Some minor variants likewise exist between the MT and Greek Septuagint, and the LXX can be useful in examining various difficulties in the Hebrew as they present themselves (Harrison, 798).

The events of Isaiah chs. 1-39 are contemporary to the Eighth-Seventh Centuries B.C.E. Significant sections of Isaiah deal with ancient prophecies intended to call Israel to repentance and restoration before God. Concurring with these major themes are sections in Isaiah of various additional prophetic oracles, poetry, hymns of praise to God, and apocalyptic revelations. Isaiah also makes distinct usage of personification, where worldly elements such as mountains and trees are often used to represent people, or represent how the world is under the control of God. Isaiah also makes mention of previous events in Israel's history such as the Exodus or other judgments He has enacted.

Common ideas seen throughout Isaiah include the judgment of God upon His rebellious people (1:2), followed by a later time of His redeeming them (41:14, 16). God will also judge the nations who try to thwart the restoration of His people (2:11, 17, 20, et. al.). Isaiah is used to call the people back to holiness, to repent from their sins, urging them to remain faithful to the Lord, and to eagerly await His Messiah. The future Messianic Age will bring the ultimate redemption as Israel is used as the conduit by which the entire world can be saved.

In the Jewish theological tradition, Isaiah is one of the most favorite of the prophetic books, being cited in more Rabbinical works than any other of the Prophets, and being used for more Haftarah selections than any of the others (*Jewish Study Bible*, 780). It is notable that there does exist some difference between the Jewish interpretations of various Messianic passages when compared to the traditional Christian interpretations. This is particularly true in identifying the Servant of Isaiah 53 (*ISBE*, 2:893-894). Targumic material of Isaiah often shows how various passages were interpreted messianically, and these are considered to be quite valuable among Christian exegetes today (*ECB*, 490).

The Book of Isaiah plays a major role in the Messianic expectations of the Apostolic Scriptures, particularly in the theology of Yeshua and His immediate followers. Isaiah is quoted more times in the New Testament than any other Tanach book besides Psalms. Isaiah relates not only to the entry of Yeshua into the world as God's Messiah, but also helps to establish the mission for God's people going out into the world. "The day of the LORD" is a time associated with the Second Coming of Yeshua to judge the Earth and establish His Kingdom.

In certain early Christian traditions, Isaiah was sometimes considered to actually be the "Fifth Gospel." While certain parts of Isaiah remain very familiar to today's Christian, most of the book remains decidedly elusive, and many Christian theologians note that this is something that needs to change (*EXP*, 3:3). Redemption is undoubtedly the overarching theme of Isaiah.

Today's emerging Messianic movement undoubtedly has a great appreciation for Isaiah. There have been some limited Messianic studies of Isaiah conducted, but it is probable that very few of them are engaged with contemporary composition issues and debates over authorship and date. It can be easily said that too many of today's Messianics who examine Isaiah probably give too much attention to ancient, post-Yeshua Jewish views of Isaiah that often subtract from Isaiah's legitimate Messianic significance. Truly, much improvement can be made for our engagement with the Book of Isaiah.

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Israelite, Salvation: Do you believe that everyone has to be a physical Israelite, and/or a physical descendant of Abraham, to be saved?

While Abraham was certainly promised multitudes of physical descendants (Genesis 22:17-18), and this was extended to Jacob/Israel (Genesis 28:4-5), to assume that salvation was *only* intended for physical descendants of the Patriarchs is to ignore the very mandate that God gave to both Abraham and Ancient Israel. God intended Ancient Israel to be a testimony to the nations of His goodness (Deuteronomy 4:5-6), and among other things the Temple was to attract outsiders to Him (2 Chronicles 6:32-33). The Apostle Paul, appropriating the promise given by the Lord to Abraham, can confidently assert,

"The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU' [Genesis 12:3]" (Galatians 3:8).

If anything, the promise of physical multiplication given by God to the Patriarchs was to increase the likelihood of exposure *to the nations* of Him—far from any kind of "salvation by ethnicity." Certainly by the time Yeshua the Messiah arrived, He ministered to the remnant of Israel—the Jewish people—and the restoration of all Israel was an undercurrent of His message (cf. Acts 1:6). Yet, the mission of the Apostles was far more concerned with the redemption of individuals, *regardless of their ethnic status*. Titus 2:11 makes it abundantly clear, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to **all men** [Grk. *pasin anthrōpōis*, πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις or 'all humans']."

Individual salvation is available to all freely through Messiah Yeshua. Any claim to the contrary is theological heresy. Salvation is available to those who are the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and to those who are a part of the greater human family. Yet, as a consequence of an individual's salvation, a born again Believer does get to be a part of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-12) or the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16). Whatever is applicable to Israel or whatever affects Israel—good or bad—now is applicable and affects a born again Believer.

Today, we see sectors of the Messianic community promoting a Two-House teaching that largely fails to clarify the position of the nations in the schema of Israel's restoration. There can be such an over-emphasis on "Judah and Ephraim," and even on the promises of physical multiplication, that not enough (if any) attention is given to the Divine mandate of Israel being a blessing to the entire world. Many can get the impression that the Two-House teaching is one of "salvation via ethnicity," rather than the simple affirmation that the eschatological promises to restore Israel involve *more than* today's Jewish people. And of course, there are those who attempt to add to what the Prophets and Apostles have told us about Israel's Kingdom.

Time and further refinement will be the only answers to counter some of these dilemmas. When people begin to realize that claiming to be a part of Israel—or even a part of Israel following the Torah—*is not enough*, then the missional aspects of being Israel can be considered. When this finally happens in the Messianic community, then we can all fulfill the Divine mandate of being a blessing to the world at large. Then the Two-House teaching can be recognized for what it is from the Scriptures—and not for what is largely floating around today.

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